

STEVENS POINT JOURNAL

**Obey talks college funding, war with UWSP students**

By Patrick Thornton • Journal staff • September 4, 2008



Doug Wojcik/Stevens Point Journal

Rep. Dave Obey, D-Wausau, talks with students Wednesday afternoon at the Dreyfus University Center during a visit to the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus.

U.S. Rep. Dave Obey, D-Wausau, treated about 30 students and faculty members at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point to a lesson in history, finance and politics Wednesday.

The chair of the House Appropriations Committee answered questions on funding for higher education, the Presidential election and the war in Iraq, among other topics.

He said this congress has done more than the American people realize including increasing funding for health care for injured veterans, increasing the minimum wage and expanding financial aid available to college students.

Senior Katie Kloth asked Obey about funding for alternative energy programs on campus and how college students can be effective in the upcoming elections.

Obey said the Republican-controlled state assembly has stonewalled funding for the University of Wisconsin system and said the environment is one of the Bush administration's main failures.

'When Jimmy Carter was president, he told the American people we needed energy independence and people laughed,' Obey said. 'Now the Republicans are saying, 'We'll drill offshore. That will solve the problem.'

'We need a comprehensive program to expand alternative energy.'

Nontraditional student Winton Miller asked Obey how the multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan will affect the country's armed forces.

Obey answered that neither the Army nor the country can afford to stay in Iraq much longer. He said so far the war has cost billions of dollars and much of that money is borrowed from other countries.

'The larger our footprint is (in the Middle East), the less stable that region is going to be,' Obey said. 'We can not stay in Iraq long-term without destroying the Army.'

The congressman predicted presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., will pull ahead of U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., after the first debate. He said the Republicans cannot win the election on big issues and are trying to pick away at Obama on trivial, social issues.

'I cannot believe this country will elect a president that stood with President Bush 90 percent of the time,' he said. 'Obama wants to end the war sooner so we can

restore our international reputation.&quot;

Obey is running for re-election for his 7th District seat. Republican Dan Mielke is challenging him.